

Personal Pre-Posting Preview by Clinical Students

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ABSTRACT

Background: Clinical posting is integral in medical schools. Preparations made prior to commencement of posting directly influence outcome. Hence, the need to study the effects of personal pre-posting preview (PPP) by clinical students.

Methods: Questionnaires were administered to senior surgery posting students at commencement, mid-way and completion of the posting to assess their knowledge, practice and outcome of PPP. The questionnaire administered at the end of the study had an additional section for objective assessment of the general outcome of the posting. Data collected were analysed as frequencies and proportions. Some results were presented as charts where applicable.

Results: Forty-nine students were involved, 7 (14.3%) had formal knowledge of PPP but only 2 (4.1%) practised it. Albeit, 25 (51.0%) had outlined personal objectives prior to previous posting but only 10 of them (40%) were up to standard. For the previous clinical posting, 2 (4.1%) indicated very satisfactory, 10 (20.4%) indicated satisfactory, 15 (30.6%) indicated average and 22 (44.9%) indicated not significant regarding the basic knowledge and skills expected to acquire in the posting.

Assessment midway into the surgery posting, after adequate enlightenment on PPP, showed 36 (73.5%) very satisfactory, 6 (12.2%) satisfactory, 5 (10.2%) average and 2 (4.1%) not significant responses regarding the effectiveness of completed posting in meeting pre-set objectives. Also, 22 (44.9%) had a full understanding of basic knowledge and skills expected to acquire in their next posting unit.

General outcome at the end of the surgery posting showed 17 (34.7%) very good, 12 (24.5%) good, 12 (24.5%) average and 8 (16.3%) poor.

Conclusion: The improvement in clinical posting observed in the study demands that PPP be popularized among clinical students.

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INTRODUCTION

Personal Pre-posting Preview (PPP) refers to an overview of common cases managed in a particular clinical unit where a clinical student is about to undergo a clinical posting. Personal Pre-posting Preview seeks to establish for the student the relevant knowledge to be acquired and the basic skills to develop during the particular clinical posting (Jackson et al., 2009).

In the institution where this research work was carried out, the clinical rotations of medical students include postings in Medicine, Surgery,

Family Medicine, Dermatology, Mental Health, Community Medicine, Anaesthesia, Radiology, Ophthalmology, Otorhinolaryngology, Orthopaedics, Paediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

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Surgery postings include junior posting which is done in 400 level for an 8-week period and senior posting which is done in 600 level for a 12-week period. In each of these postings the students are

shared into groups and made to rotate through the sub-units of surgery including general surgery, urology, plastic surgery, paediatric surgery, neurosurgery and cardiothoracic surgery. A longer duration is spent in general surgery. Each of the posting entails patient clerkship, ward rounds, outpatient clinic sessions, seminars, theatre sessions and clinical demonstrations. Albeit, the senior posting is of higher standard and responsibility.

It is a common parlance that "To be forewarned is to be forearmed". Personal Pre-posting Preview forewarns clinical students about cases to expect during the posting and they become forearmed with some knowledge of the cases while they anticipate more stuff to learn as well as develop pre-set objectives and pre-set questions to be answered during the posting. This concept is thought to enhance the learning of basic knowledge and skills during clinical postings (Jackson et al., 2009; Gemuhay et al., 2019).

Pre-posting preview can be done by the student concerned and the department hosting the clinical posting. Many departments have the course outline as well as learning objectives clearly stated in the departmental prospectus handed over to students. This is the practice in Duke-NUS Medical School (2020), Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Alberta, Canada (2025) and Orthopaedics Trauma, Wright State University (2025). Some departments go ahead to organize orientation programmes at the beginning of the clinical posting where the learning objectives are clearly outlined to students billed for posting. However, these practices are not carried out in some medical schools. While some may have a prospectus, it is not revised often and students are not helped to see the importance of utilizing it for Personal Pre-posting Preview. This has significantly affected the performance of students in clinical postings. Shuid et al (2015) and Zaidi et al (2020) reported similar findings.

On the part of the student, Personal Pre-posting Preview can be carried out by carefully studying the course content and learning objectives highlighted in the departmental prospectus. The student can personally enquire from senior students, resident doctors in the unit or departmental staff to know the relevant cases and basic skills relevant to know and acquire during the posting. He or she can then go ahead to outline personal objectives and write down pre-set questions to be answered during the posting. Thus, Personal Pre-posting Preview gives the student a sense of direction and responsibility as to what knowledge and skills must be acquired during the posting. Moreover, where the

departments drive the process of pre-posting preview, as also reported by Remmen et al (2001), effective mentorship is ensured and the students are put under obligation to achieve the learning objectives.

Considering the efficiency added to clinical posting by the practice of pre-posting preview, it has become necessary to publish the concept of Personal Pre-posting Preview and highlight the nitty-gritty of this principle as well as its positive outcomes to clinical students and medical institutions with conscious efforts aimed at improving clinical postings. Hence, the need for this research work.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A particular batch of students who just reported for Senior posting in Surgery department, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma in a particular session were administered questionnaires to assess their knowledge and practice of Personal Pre-Posting Preview by Clinical Students. The questionnaire had twenty questions of which sixteen were closed and four were open questions. Knowledge and practice of PPP were assessed by both closed (yes or no) and open (written description) questions.

The number of those who were formally aware of the concept of Pre-posting preview was noted, the number of those who practised the concept was noted and for the latter, the effect on their last posting was noted. The questionnaire also requested the students to state whether they had personal objectives (written description) and pre-set questions (written description) before embarking on their last clinical posting.

Following the completion of the questionnaires, the students were educated on the principles, practice and advantages of Personal Pre-Posting Preview by Clinical Students before they commenced clinical rotations in the different surgical units available in the department. They were then assessed sometime during the posting on a day when each resumed a new unit; without prior notification. Questionnaires (with open and close questions) were administered to them and each student was expected to state the effectiveness of the completed clinical posting in meeting set objectives and answering pre-set questions. Then the students were requested to state (written description) the basic knowledge and clinical skills expected to acquire during the surgery unit posting they were about to commence. Eventually, the general performance with regards to understanding basic principles and skills acquisition of the students during the surgery clinical posting was assessed as very good, good,

average or poor on the basis of the departmental template. Data collected were analysed as frequencies and proportions using IBM SPSS Statistics version 21. The results were presented in bar charts and pie charts where applicable.

RESULTS

The number of medical students involved in this study were 49, 29 males and 20 females. Thirty-seven of them were 25 – 30 years age-range while twelve of them were above 30 years. Figure 1 shows the number of those who had formal knowledge of Personal Pre-Posting Preview by Clinical Students.

Only 2 (4.1%) practised Personal Pre-Posting Preview by Clinical Students in their previous posting before surgery posting; 47 (95.9%) did not. Of the 2 that practised it, one affirmed that it influenced the posting very well while the other said it influenced it to some extent.

Those who had outlined personal objectives prior to the posting were 25 (51.0%) and 24 (49.0%) did not have. When the 25 with outlined personal objectives were evaluated based on expected standard, the outcome is shown in figure 2.

Those who had pre-set questions before embarking on their last clinical posting were 4

(8.2%) and 45 (91.8%) did not have. For the previous clinical posting, 2 (4.1%) indicated very satisfactory, 10 (20.4%) indicated satisfactory, 15 (30.6%) indicated average and 22 (44.9%) indicated not significant as regards the understanding of basic knowledge and skills required for the posting.

An assessment midway into the surgery posting, after the 49 medical students were educated on the principles, practice and advantages of Personal Pre-Posting Preview by Clinical Students at the beginning of the posting, showed 22 (44.9%) had understanding of basic knowledge and clinical skills expected to acquire in the posting they were about to commence but 27 (55.1%) did not have. The responses of the students when administered questionnaires seeking to know the effectiveness of the completed clinical posting in surgery in relation to the set objectives and pre-set questions are as shown in figure 3.

The general performance of the students with regards to understanding basic principles and skills acquisition during the surgery clinical posting when assessed at the end of the posting showed the following outcome in Figure 4.

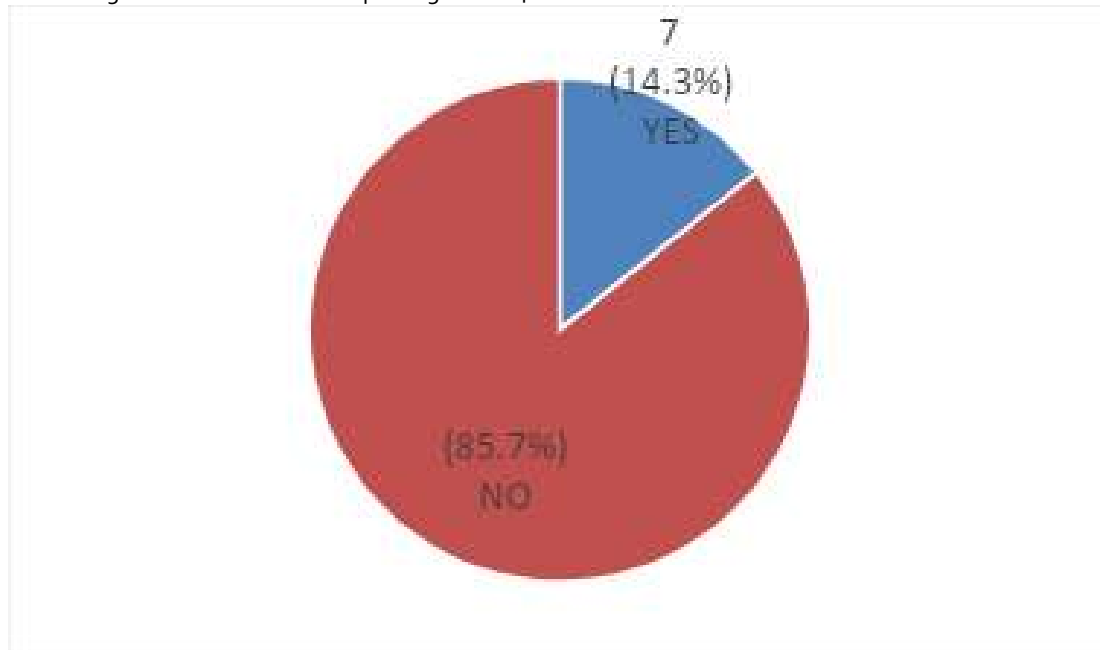


Figure 1: Formal knowledge of Personal Pre-Posting Preview

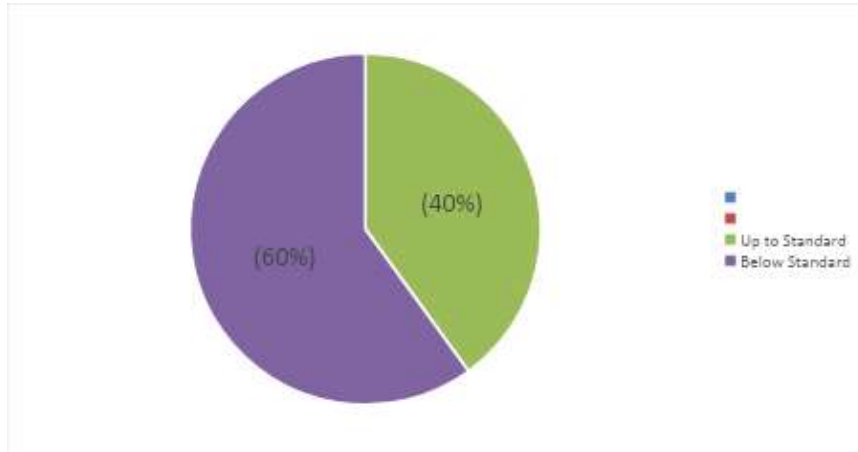


Figure 2: Standard level of outlined personal objectives

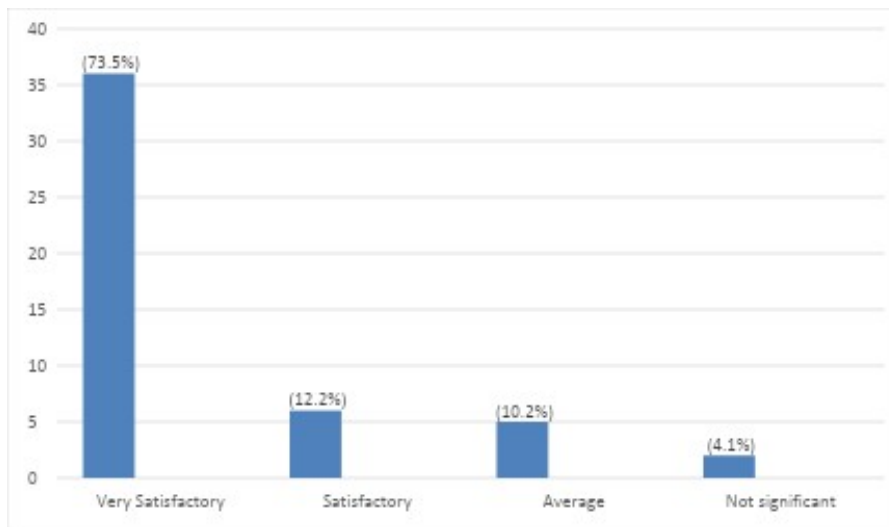


Figure 3: Students responses to the Effect of Personal Pre-Posting Preview on completed posting in previous Surgical Units

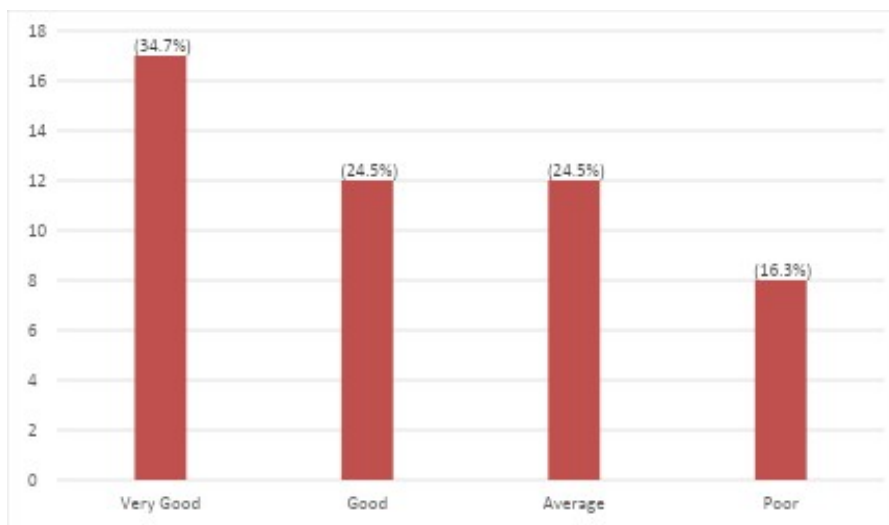


Figure 4: Assessment of General performance of the students with regards to understanding basic principles and skills acquisition during the surgery clinical posting

DISCUSSION

The knowledge and practice of Personal Pre-Posting Preview (PPP) by Clinical Students is very important because it can improve in a very great way the assimilation of basic clinical knowledge and skills during a clinical posting. Similar findings were reported by Jackson et al (2009), Gemuhay et al. (2019), Zaidi et al. (2020) and Kitaba (2022). This particular concept was not found on google scholar search but there are many other publications addressing similar issues.

The students who were about to commence senior posting in surgery were selected for this study because they are final year students and have been involved with clinical postings for the past three academic sessions. This category of students was thought to be the best respondents to give their opinions regarding the subject of study.

Only 7 (14.3%) of the respondents had formal knowledge of PPP, the other 42 (85.7%) did not have. This is due to the fact that this concept has not been popularised. Although, 25 (51.0%) of the respondents had practised some form of non-formal pre-posting preview and had set objectives prior to the clinical posting but in the majority (15, 60%) these objectives were below expected standard. This shows that the lack of adequate knowledge of Personal Pre-Posting Preview (PPP) by Clinical Students affects the standard of pre-set objectives prior to commencement of the clinical posting as well as the eventual outcome of the posting. This finding was corroborated by other authors including Remmen et al (2001), Jackson et al (2009), Shuid et al (2015), Zaidi et al (2020) and Olorunfemi et al (2021). Olorunfemi et al (2021) established that student motivation before commencement of clinical posting improves their active participation and positive outcome. Zaidi et al. (2020) in their study stated that students reported poor supervision and lack of orientation, both from ineffective departmental preparation of students for clinical posting as barriers to effective clinical learning. In the work of Shuid et al. (2015), a high percentage of students (90.5%) agreed that clinical skills teaching was a useful pre-clinical module to prepare them for their clinical years.

Only 2 (4.1%) of the respondents had formally practised Personal Pre-Posting Preview by Clinical Students in their previous posting (before surgery posting) and both were positive of the outcome. While one affirmed that it influenced the posting very well, the other said it influenced it to some extent. It is strongly believed that as more students are exposed to the concept of PPP, there will be phenomenal increase in the positive outcome of clinical postings (Remmen et al. 2001; Jackson et

al.,2009; Shuid et al., 2015; Zaidi et al., 2020; Olorunfemi et al., 2021).

Personal Pre-Posting Preview guides the clinical student to make pre-set questions prior to commencement of the posting. These pre-set questions make the student focus on the knowledge to acquire during the clinical posting. Unsurprisingly, those who had pre-set questions before embarking on their last clinical posting were 4 (8.2%) because of lack of awareness of this concept. Hence, many students (22, 44.9%) reported their experience as not significant considering the understanding of the basic knowledge and skills expected to acquire in the posting. Remmen et al (2001), Jackson et al (2009) and Zaidi et al (2020) reported similar findings regarding poor awareness and lack of thorough understanding of the practice of pre-posting preview. Zaidi et al (2020) studied the perspective of 300 students regarding barriers to learning during clinical rotations in the Emergency Department and showed the mean perception score was 52.0 ± 11.74 .

Midway into the surgery posting, 22 (44.9%) showed good understanding of basic knowledge and clinical skills expected to acquire in the posting which they were about to commence after all 49 students were assessed. Compared to their response at the beginning of the study, this was a significant increase resulting from adequate enlightenment given to them on the concept, principles, practice and advantages of Personal Pre-Posting Preview by clinical students prior to commencement of the surgery posting. This is similar to the reports of Remmen et al (2001), Jackson et al (2009), Shuid et al (2015), Zaidi et al (2020) and Olorunfemi et al (2021).

Still on the mid-surgery posting evaluations, the students' responses to administered questionnaire seeking to know the effectiveness of the completed clinical posting in surgery in relation to the set objectives and pre-set questions showed 36 (73.5%) very satisfactory, 6 (12.2%) satisfactory, 5 (10.2%) average and 2 (4.1%) not significant. These responses are testament to the tremendous impact which a sound knowledge of Personal Pre-Posting Preview can make on clinical students as supported by the findings of Remmen et al. (2001) and Zaidi et al. (2020).

Eventually, the assessment of the general performance of the students with regards to understanding basic principles and skills acquisition during the surgery clinical posting revealed 17 (34.7%) very good, 12 (24.5%) good, 12 (24.5%) average and 8 (16.3%) poor. This being a stark contrast to what was the case in their

previous posting amplifies the importance of the enlightenment on Personal Pre-Posting Preview by clinical student prior to commencement of the surgery posting.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study point to the need to popularize Personal Pre-Posting Preview by clinical students as well as impressing on medical schools everywhere to emphasize the concept as an integral part of their clinical training programmes. It is believed that effective practice of Personal Pre-Posting Preview by clinical students and strict adherence to the principle as part of the curriculum of medical schools will improve the outcome of clinical postings tremendously.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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